SECTION 12 – CIVIC SPACES

Civic spaces

Definition

12.1 Civic spaces include civic and market squares and other hard surfaced community areas designed for pedestrians. The primary purpose of civic spaces is the provision of a setting for civic buildings, public demonstrations and community events. Civic spaces often define the character of urban environments such as Hull.

Queen Victoria Square, Hull

Strategic context and consultation

12.2 PPG 17 states that “the purpose of civic spaces, mainly in town and city centres, is to provide a setting for civic buildings, opportunities for open air markets, demonstrations and civic events. They are normally provided on an opportunistic and urban design led basis. Accordingly it is for planning authorities to promote urban design frameworks for their town and city centre areas”.

12.3 33% of residents use civic spaces more than once a month, which is the third highest response out of all typologies in the city. This highlights the regular usage of civic spaces in Hull.

12.4 There are no definitive national or local standards for civic spaces. However, the City Centre Action Plan does make references to the provision of public open space

12.5 The plan puts in place the planning policies required to deliver the City Centre Masterplan and ensures that new developments meet good design and sustainability. The aim of the Masterplan is, “...to deliver in Hull City Centre the scale, mix and quality of development needed to enable it to offer the unique advantages of a city centre location”.

12.6 The strategic objectives of relevance to the plan are to:

- create a unified and compact city centre
- re unite the city centre with its River Humber waterfront
- create a lively River Hull corridor within the compact city centre.
12.7 Civic spaces are a form of public open space and can help deliver a number of the strategic objectives outlined above.

**Current Provision**

12.8 18 civic spaces have been identified throughout the audit, specifically:

- Albion Square (Proposed)
- College Campus
- History Centre Park
- Humber Dock Promenade
- Island Wharf
- Kingston Square
- Land at William Booth
- Nelson Street
- Paragon square
- Princes Dock Side
- Quay West (Proposed)
- Queen Victoria Square
- Queens Dock Avenue
- Railway Street
- St Stephens civic space
- St. Stephens East/Transport Interchange
- Trinity Square
- Wellington Street.

12.9 Civic spaces are considered to be particularly important within the City Centre, with many residents indicating that they visit these spaces frequently.

12.10 There is a split in opinion regarding the quantity of civic spaces in Hull with 39% of respondents to the household survey stating provision is insufficient and 36% indicating provision is sufficient. These viewpoints may be reflective of the character of civic spaces, which by nature are located in central areas.

**Setting a quantity standard**

12.11 PPG17 suggests that it is not realistic to set a quantity standard for civic spaces in light of their specialist nature.

12.12 Therefore **no provision standard** has been set. However, PPG17 adds that it is desirable for planning authorities to promote urban design frameworks for their town and city centres. The design and planning of new neighbourhoods in Hull should take into account the demand for new civic spaces from local residents and ensure that such spaces are incorporated within master plans. The City Centre Action Plan is evidence that the role of civic spaces is recognised in Hull.

**Quality standard**

12.13 The quality of each site has been assessed through a detailed site visit and the completion of a detailed pro forma described in Section 2. More detail is provided in Appendix G. It is important to note that the quality score represents a snapshot in time and records only the quality of the site at the time of the site visit. Consultation indicated that the quality of civic spaces has significantly improved in recent years.

12.14 Full details of the consultation and justifications for the recommended local standard are provided within Appendix G. The recommended local standard, derived directly from consultation across Hull has been summarised below.
Quality Standard (see Appendix G)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean/Litter free</td>
<td>Flowers/trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets</td>
<td>Parking facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating</td>
<td>On site security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Detailed analysis of the local consultation suggests that with regards to civic spaces, the relative importance of the key components is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component of quality</th>
<th>Proportion of possible total responses received</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security and Safety</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness and maintenance</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancillary accommodation</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12.15 The application of the weightings contributes to the overall site assessment scores. The key issues emerging from the site assessments and local consultations relating to the quantity of provision of civic spaces include:

- civic spaces are perceived to be of average quality by 57% of respondents to the household survey. 25% of respondents view their quality to be either good or very good
- site assessments reveal that average score for civic spaces is 73%, suggesting that sites are of higher quality than some other typologies. The scores allocated to sites ranged from 57% to 88%, suggesting that while the overall quality of sites is good, there remain some more quality sites
- the most satisfied residents are those in the Riverside area where 41% feel that the quality of the sites are good. This is perhaps influenced by the abundance of civic spaces in this area of the city. It is in this area where the city centre is located
- perceptions that civic spaces are well maintained are consistent across all areas. This was also evident during site visits, although some of the key problems identified included litter and cleanliness and tired facilities such as seats and benches
- there are few comments regarding civic spaces received during drop in sessions, however residents do consider there to be a number of good quality civic spaces in Hull. Hull Marina and Queen Victoria Square are mentioned as high quality civic spaces, regularly used by residents and visitors alike
- a number of residents emphasise that civic spaces are important in a city centre environment in order to escape the stress of work and access fresh air
site visits suggest that there are several opportunities for further improvement of the civic spaces in Hull.

### Accessibility

12.16 Site specific accessibility issues were analysed as part of the programme of site visits and information and signage, transport and general issues were also assessed.

12.17 Site assessment ratings show that civic spaces in Hull are easily accessible. Site scores ranged from 63% to 93%. The majority of sites are centrally located and are easily accessible on foot and by public transport.

### Setting an Accessibility standard

12.18 PPG17 states that there is no realistic requirement to set catchments for such a typology as the provision of civic spaces will not be appropriate in every environment and cannot be easily influenced through planning policy and implementation.

12.19 Appropriate access to sites is however paramount in maximising usage.

### Applying provision standards

12.20 Given that it is not appropriate to set any local quantity or accessibility standards, it is also not appropriate to state areas of deficiency or need based on standards.

12.21 As suggested by PPG17, planning policy should aim to facilitate the delivery of civic spaces where appropriate and to provide guidelines as to the appropriate design for such facilities.

### Summary

12.22 There are 18 civic spaces across the city. Throughout the consultation, the aesthetic importance of civic spaces is highlighted and they are perceived to be regularly used by both visitors and residents. Civic spaces function as a key meeting place and provide a release from the stress of work.

12.23 The nature of this typology means that they are very specific to their locality. The design and planning of new neighbourhoods in Hull should take into account demand for new civic spaces from local residents and ensure that such spaces are incorporated within master plans.

12.24 A quality standard has been set as a benchmark for new areas of civic space and the maintenance of existing areas across the city.